

Good evening County Executive Mark Elrich and members of the council. My name is Ulima Fofana, and I am a senior and SGA member attending Thomas S. Wootton High School.

Throughout my 3 years of attending this school, I have never felt like I was learning in a sanitary and safe environment. One day, when I wanted to use one of the many dysfunctional bathrooms in Wootton, I noticed how the door would quickly swing open due to its loose hinges. That door was so unhinged that the noise of the door frightened the classroom across the hall. That noise frightened my peers and me that day. All I could think at that moment was if that 100-pound door would collapse on me or anyone else who would enter. As I ventured past the unhinged door, I stumbled upon a line in the bathroom. I asked the person in front of me, “ why is no one using the other stall,” to which she replied, “it's broken.” I waited for my turn to use the singular functional toilet and began contemplating if I should still wait, knowing it was taking time away from my classwork. 10 minutes later, it was my turn to use the bathroom. As I came out to wash my hands, I heard a blaring noise from the faucet, along with its vigorous rattling. Additionally, I tried to wash my hands with no hot water or soap. As disgusted and aggravated as I was about not being able to wash my hands, another problem occurred. While the faucet was running, I wondered why my new Nirvana shirt was wet. I turned the faucet back on and noticed the broken sink sprayed droplets of water out of it. I was annoyed and frustrated; all I could think of was how wet and disgusting my new shirt was and how I was going to have homework now that I had waited in the long bathroom line. Now let's put this into perspective. These events occurred during my freshman year. Nevertheless, I still find myself opening the loose, squeaky door, just to stand in line, wait for the one usable toilet, and, yes, use the same broken faucet.

I stand before you to speak on how overlooked my community has been. Your mission statement has an emphasis on “equity,” yet you insist on skipping my school’s renovation, year

after year, to the current date being sometime in 2029. These events are not acceptable nor equitable. However, I ask myself why it's equitable for schools such as Seneca Valley, Wheaton, BCC, and many more like them to have had the privilege of being expanded and remodeled. I acknowledge that your intention to remodel Seneca Valley was to develop “ A comfortable, naturally lit, and energy-efficient environment.” Yet, I often wonder why those intentions are not applied to the Wootton community year after year.

How is it equitable for schools such as Seneca Valley, Wheaton, and BCC to have these amenities, but for my school to keep suffering from the perpetual leaks, the snake falling out of the ceiling, the A/C being on when it's 35 degrees outside, the gaping holes in the ceiling, the lack of aeration in the bathrooms, the massive holes that we have to cover to keep plastering shut, so the rats stay out. Lastly, from the many things on this list, our mental well-being be jeopardized due to my peers constantly questioning if their safety is in danger? How are we supposed to feel safe in a school that is so hazardous?

The only impartial way to rectify this situation is to begin a CIP budget for Wootton to be remodeled. All my peers and I truly desire is to fulfill your mission statement of providing a safe environment for kids to learn.

Thank you for your time.